Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 131 Abagail Adams

Elementary Q131

170-45 84 Avenue
Queens
NY 11432

Principal: Veronica Depaolo

Date of review: May 24, 2016
Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth

The School Context

P.S. 131 Abagail Adams is an elementary school with 832 students from kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 74% Asian, 8% Black, 12% Hispanic, and 4% White students. The student body includes 20% English Language Learners and 10% students with disabilities. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 95.3%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**Area of:**	**Rating:**
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	**Additional Findings**	**Well Developed**
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	**Focus**	**Proficient**
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels	**Additional Findings**	**Proficient**
School Culture		
To what extent does the school…	**Area of:**	**Rating:**
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	**Celebration**	**Well Developed**
Systems for Improvement		
To what extent does the school…	**Area of:**	**Rating:**
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	**Additional Findings**	**Proficient**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness and partner successfully with families.

Impact
A culture of mutual accountability for high expectations exists among staff, which further supports student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- Expectations related to academics and performance for all students are consistently communicated to staff through a variety of sources including; staff handbooks, emails, weekly circulars, and conferences. All staff members receive and review the handbook at the start of the school year, which outlines academic expectations. Specific details related to lesson plans are provided teachers to ensure that all varied needs of their students are addressed. Additionally, weekly circulars remind staff of school happenings, as well as expectations for any curriculum and assessment revisions, and the information that is to be communicated to all families.

- Professional development plans and agendas purposefully focus on the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* domain that addresses engaging students in their learning. The building leaders, in conjunction with the teachers, plan and facilitate the professional development sessions. Research-based articles related to the sessions are shared with the staff and expectations are provided to the teachers to expand their knowledge. A recent professional development session involved teachers completing a personal inventory of their differentiated instruction following the reading of an educational article. Teachers often share out ideas as a grade team during these conferences. Teachers are always prepared to share one specific instructional strategy they have tried based on their training.

- Families play an integral role in supporting students' academic success through serving as Learning Leaders. Parents volunteer to attend training and become certified to provide individual instructional support in classes their own child does not attend. Parental involvement and attendance at school workshops has increased throughout the year. A recent workshop series, designed to prepare families for the next grade, focused on academic rigor and content experiences, as well as opportunities for summer enrichment throughout New York City. Other parent workshops have helped inform and guide parents' understanding of the *Fountas & Pinnell* reading levels. Parents believe that the clear communication provided by the school has helped them select appropriate books for their children. They also feel confident about how to use many online instructional tools because of the workshops they have attended on the use of technology and learning.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best.

Impact
The Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and instructional shifts support teaching practices. High levels of student thinking and participation are evident, although student ownership is not as yet present in the vast majority of classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- The belief that students learn best through engaging in discussion is evident across grades and content classes. Lesson planning documents reflect opportunities for students to engage in rich discussions through a variety of approaches, including small group and turn-and-talks. Varied levels of discussion were observed which permitted students to be able to take ownership of their learning across some classes. For example, during a grade 1 reading class, students read aloud with their partners and identified the problem and solution using text-based evidence. Students had the opportunity to challenge one another and explain their findings. Additionally, following completion of the graphic organizer, students explained how they self-reflect on their learning using a rubric. In a grade 5 class, students were referring to their checklist when sharing some glows and grows with their partner based on a reading of their memoir. However, in other classes, although students had the opportunity to engage in conversation, often the quick pace of the lesson did not support higher levels of questioning and deeper understanding.

- Both the teachers and the building leadership believe there is the need to focus on student engagement through differentiated professional development. Throughout some classes, but not all, students were provided differentiated tasks, readings, and or graphic organizers. For example, in a math class, resources, including worksheets and manipulatives were provided students to help them identify ordering and writing numbers to the thousands. Additionally, grouping of students was based on prior assessment findings. However, the level of grouping and purposeful differentiation did not clearly allow for high-levels of rigorous instruction. Similar experiences were observed throughout other classes. As such, student's engagement in their assigned task occasionally limited their ability to complete it with deeper ownership.

- Small group instruction is an instructional strategy used by all teachers. Throughout classes, students were observed in small groups. Students were either working on a common task, working with the teacher or paraprofessional, or assessing one another's work products. For example, in a kindergarten English Language Arts class, groups of students were challenged with making a prediction of a story using only one page from a uniformly shared storybook. In an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, students were assigned to one of several groups to complete the task and when they were done they could complete an extension activity from the Grab-n-Go bin.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Additionally, curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using students work and data.

Impact
Purposeful curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students, including, English Language Learners and students with disabilities. All students have access to the curricula and participate in cognitively engaging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curriculum planning documents reveals specific preparation for tiered activities across content and grades. For example, a grade 4 math plan focused on the Common Core Learning Standard centered on relative sizes of measurement units and includes evidence of differentiation. The lower group of students will complete the reteach packet while the higher group will complete the enrichment packet. Additionally, plans include extensions for students who complete their assigned task early. Students in the lower or middle tiered group would select an exemplar problem to solve, or problems in the enrichment packet. A lesson plan from a grade 1 English Language Arts teacher, lists plans for all four tiers of students. Plans indicate that tier 1 and 2 students will work with the core teacher on their writing, while tier 3 students will write using the provided rubric and tier 4 students will add more details to their essay using a checklist as a guideline.

- Online resources are used to inform planning of strategic learning groups, drive instruction, scaffold instruction with intervention tools, and identify specific deficits for focused curriculum alignment. For example, English Language Learners demonstrated regression after holiday and mid-winter vacations. Student's language acquisition diminished during those periods as well. An action plan was developed to address this retrogression of student learning. Curricular resources were provided online which has led to an increase in comprehension, especially among kindergarten and first grade students. Additionally, adoption of a new literacy program in kindergarten through grade 3 has strategically integrated the instructional shifts while supporting the staff's and leadership's philosophy of "guided reading with embedded vocabulary should be on, below, and above grade level…" Recent data indicate that as a result of these curricular adoptions and strategies, there has been a 7% increase in the overall averages for the English Language Learners.

- Daily lesson plans are written to include connections with prior lessons, real life applications, and instructional techniques. In one lesson plan reviewed, the teacher asked students to explain two ways to share a sandwich with a friend. In another plan, students were presented with a phone conversation that a child overheard and students were asked to discuss the emotion that was conveyed during the phone call. In yet another plan, there was reference to a prior lesson where the teacher explained "Yesterday, we did such a great job making predictions… however, I suddenly realized that my prediction was wrong, and I had to revise and change my prediction with the new information I had." Thus, modeling for her students and pushing their thinking.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. Additionally, the school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact
Actionable feedback is provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Common assessment results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Rubrics and checklists are used across grades and content areas. In addition, exemplar pieces are given to students to review at the beginning of each unit to provide a focal point for learning. Students shared they often "receive rubrics and exemplars prior to beginning a task." The rubrics provide feedback in the form of annotations on performance and occasionally, additional written feedback, in the form of glows and grows. In some classes, students also develop the rubric for the task they will be required to complete. For example, a "How to…" rubric was generated by students in a class to assist them in writing an introduction. The student-generated rubric included an example at each of the four performance levels. Teachers also use specific rubrics for problem solving in math and for science notebooks.

- Common assessments are administered in ELA and math to determine students' performance level and are shared with teachers to determine their progress towards goals. Several assessment tools, including the *Fountas & Pinnell* reading assessment are used for establishing a student's reading level. The results of the assessments are provided to students and their families. Additionally, benchmark assessments in all content areas are administered in the fall, winter and spring, to provide teachers data to be used to adjust instruction if necessary. The adoption of the *Wonders* literacy program afforded the teachers the opportunity to administer weekly skill-based assessments. The results are used to develop strategic learning groups week by week. This was an important practice used in the lower grades when phonemic fluency became an area of focus.

- Written feedback was provided to students on many of their assignments and projects. For example, a grade 1 student received circles highlighting his performance level. Students received a scored on each component on the rubric for opinion writing. Another student had an additional written comment at the bottom of her graded rubric stating, "Amazing, your introduction was great and created suspense and used a lot of figurative language." On another essay the rubric included a circle indicating excellent work. In addition, there was a glow and grow for the student to reflect upon. The written grow stated "next time continue writing on each line until the end of the page." While another student's feedback advised him to organize the story with paragraphs.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Additionally, teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work.

Impact
Inquiry meetings and teacher collaboration have strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers. Additionally, the analysis of assessment data has improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Inquiry teams meet regularly and use protocols, which include a review of prior agenda items including the identification of next steps. At the inquiry team meeting, members looked for trends across student work samples and wrote notes in the margins of the student work as they did their reviews. Following a protocol, teachers adhered to a time schedule and analyzed the work products, after which they shared warm and cool feedback. Most warm feedback focused on the student's level of interest and passion for writing assignments with student choice. The cool feedback involved having students include a topic sentence. Teachers shared several next steps, including efforts to remain focused on transition words and encouraging more evidence based writing.

- Articulation forms are beginning to be implemented as a record-keeping tool for inquiry meetings. Several of the forms highlight several questions for members to consider during team meeting time. Questions include "What specific data, information, and or resources are used?", "What challenges are you facing?" and "What are your next steps?" Identified next steps focused on the continued monitoring of student work for tone, and the adjustment of the instructional exemplar resource for the next unit.

- The staff believes that inquiry meetings positively impact their teaching practices and help them make necessary curricula adjustments. Teachers shared that the meetings help them look more carefully at data to assess instruction and adjust accordingly. Additionally, teachers use the inquiry time to discuss if immediate curricular adjustments need to be made based on findings from their analysis. Several general examples were referenced regarding how and when it was accomplished this year. Ultimately, student achievement was recognized as the primary reason for inquiry, especially as it has positively impacted English Language Learners.